

SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE
28 April 1982

Ex-CIA Deputy's Warning

Spy System 'Marginal'

By Michael Harris

United States intelligence is able to issue warnings if the Soviet Union plans surprise attacks, but in most other respects, the system's effectiveness is only "marginal," retiring CIA deputy director Bobby R. Inman declared yesterday.

"We reject out of hand the likelihood that we could be surprised by a Pearl Harbor kind of attack of substantial size," Admiral Inman told delegates to the American Newspaper Publishers Association convention at the Fairmont Hotel.

However, he said, the nation's intelligence system can function far better in providing reports on Soviet military readiness than it can in furnishing vital political and economic information.

Inman said that years of neglect and budget cutbacks have left the United States deficient in the "encyclopedic knowledge" it needs to understand what is happening in parts of the world most likely to be involved in the economic and political crises of the 1980s and 1990s.

Inman said he is encouraged that a long-range program to restore missing intelligence capability during the next five to seven years has the backing of the administration and appears likely to win approval by Congress.

The veteran intelligence officer said he had decided not to join in helping to rebuild the system — even though "my arm was twisted severely."

Inman announced his resignation last week, saying he had decided it was time for him to leave both the CIA and the Navy to start a career in private life after 28 years of public service.

In response to a question by Los Angeles Times publisher Tom Johnson, Inman repeated earlier denials that he quit because of disagree-

ments with CIA director William Casey.

"There were no policy decisions that caused me to resign in protest," he said. "There were lots of disagreements — a number of them solved to my satisfaction. But, of those that were not, there were none over matters of principle."

Inman said the quality of the nation's intelligence services began deteriorating with cutbacks when manpower was diverted during the war in Vietnam. Further budget reductions followed.

"From the plateau of 1964 to the low point in the '70s, we drew down 40 percent of the intelligence manpower," Inman said.

Inman said the nation's intelligence problems were compounded when the Defense Intelligence Agency began its operations in the 1960s by taking 60 percent of its staff from existing organizations in the armed services.

"It was a classic study of how not to go about creating an organization," Inman said. "The DIA picked up some quality problems right at the outset — simply by not having the top quality needed to compete."

Inman spoke following the publishers association's annual business meeting, at which William C. Marcil, publisher of The Forum in Fargo, N. D., was elected chairman. Marcil succeeds Katherine Graham, publisher of the Washington Post.